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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8060
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1456
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4956
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8538
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6107
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3979
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1942
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000661

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: MORE ARRESTS AND RESTRICTIONS

REF: RANGOON 617

Classified By: CDA Tom Vajda for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. On August 12, police arrested two of the five MPs-elect who denounced the regime's "roadmap to democracy" in a July 21 letter to the UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council. Sources also confirmed the June 12 arrest of activist Myat Thu for his cyclone relief work, but did not believe his arrest was connected to a recent DRL grant for a separate human rights project. An opposition lawyer reported that fifteen monks who were arrested on August 15 at Rangoon Central Railway station have been sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Insein prison. A senior Rangoon monk told us that the government-sponsored monk organization Sangha Maha Aryaka has reiterated a 2006 order that bans monks in Rangoon Division from leaving their monasteries between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. - though most monks have never abided by the rarely-enforced order. END SUMMARY.

Letter-Writing MPs-Elect Arrested

12. (C) Embassy sources have confirmed reports that authorities arrested two NLD MPs-elect early in the morning on August 12. Opposition lawyer U Aung Thein told us that MP-elect U Nyi Pu, from Gwa Township, Rakhine State, was detained at 3:30 a.m. local time. At the time of his arrest, he was visiting the house of Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) member U Thein Pe in Rangoon. Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) member Maung Maung Lay confirmed that Dr. Tin Min Htut, MP-elect from Pantanaw Township, Irrawaddy Division, was also arrested in Rangoon on August 12. Authorities have not released any information regarding where the detained MPs-elect are being held or the reasons for their detention.

13. (C) Nyi Pu and Dr. Tin Min Htut are two of five MPs-elect who sent a July 21 letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and the UN Security Council denouncing the regime's seven-step "roadmap to democracy" and criticizing the May constitutional referendum. A signatory of the letter, Zomi National Congress president Pu Chin Sian Thang, could not confirm media reports that his cosignatories Thein Pe and Dr. Myint Naing, both MPs-elect from Sagaing Division, had gone into hiding.

Another Human Rights Arrest Confirmed

14. (C) Separately, human rights activist Myat Ko Ko confirmed that authorities arrested his brother, Myat Thu, and a colleague on June 12 on suspicion of possessing foreign currency that they received for their Nargis relief efforts. Myat Thu did not have any currency at the time of his arrest, although his colleague did, according to Myat Ko Ko. There has been no hearing so far. In addition to his Nargis relief efforts, Myat Thu ran a loose-knit group called Human Rights Watch Bago, a loosely-formed organization that documents human rights abuses and raises human rights awareness in villages surrounding the city of Bago in Bago Division. The group is a recipient of DRL funding. Myat Ko Ko did not believe, however, that his brother's arrest was connected to the U.S. funding, pointing out that authorities appeared to be interested in his cyclone relief work, which we did not fund. Additionally, according to Myat Ko Ko, authorities have never inquired about USG funding of Human Rights Watch Bago, even since his brother's arrest. Myat Ko Ko assumed leadership of the organization when his brother was detained.

Continued Pressure on Monks

15. (C) Opposition Lawyer U Aung Thein confirmed that the 15 monks arrested on July 15 at Rangoon Central Railway station have been sentenced to two years imprisonment. Officials charged the monks with violating Article 295(a) of the Penal

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Code, which punishes "the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings" with up to two years' imprisonment and/or fines. However, witnesses to the arrest reported that the monks were not engaged in any protests and did not even appear to be traveling together (Reftel). Aung Thein believed the monks were being held in Insein Prison.

16. (C) The senior monk and chairman of the Dagon Township Sangha (religious order) told our political assistant that the government-sponsored Sangha Maha Aryaka issued an instruction last week reinforcing a 2006 order that banned monks in Rangoon Division from leaving their monasteries between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. However, a western scholar who has studied monastic institutions and lived in Burma for the last three years reported that monks he knew continued to ignore the curfew. Moreover, he pointed out that during Buddhist Lent monks attach themselves to one monastery and remain there for the period, making any need to officially control their movement unnecessary.

VAJDA